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Gandhi's Role in Indian Freedom Struggle: A Critical Understanding

Pankaj Borah
Asst. Professor,Deptt. of Political Science
Arya Vidyapeeth College, Ghy-16
Email-pborah6@gmail.co
Ph. 9706970256

Abstract:

Gandhi had an unflinching and unshakable faith in the theory of non-violence. He played a pivotal role in the India's struggle for freedom which was the world's largest democratic movement. Indian nationalism achieved its highest peak under Gandhi's leadership. No doubt it was he, who organized the movement on mass basis and tried his best to unite both Hindus and Muslims, uplift the economic and social status of the untouchables. Gandhi evolved and developed a powerful non-violent method, giving it the name Satyagraha. Though in contemporary period there are various criticisms on him but we must observe him from that particular period of freedom struggle.

Introduction:

The Indian Freedom Struggle was one of the largest democratic movements against imperialism and colonialism. The Indian Freedom Struggle provides the best examples of nationalism and patriotism which may be adopted and pursued in order to root out the undemocratic institutions of colonialism. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, popularly known as 'Mahatma Gandhi' or Bapu was a moral reformist. It is widely accepted that Gandhi was the back bone of the non-violent struggle for freedom of India.

Gandhi was influenced by the political ideas of *Gopal Krishna* and considered him as his "Political Guru". Gandhi learnt his faith in non-violence from Jainism. The Bible gave him the sermon not to hurt anybody's heart. It also taught him to love and to do well to the others. *Gita* taught him to render selfless service. From David Thoreau, he borrowed the idea of civil disobedience and from Leo Tolstoy the idea of solving problems with love.

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First Phrase of Gandhi's Leadership in Indian Freedom Struggle: 1914 - 1919

Gandhi played a pivotal role in the India's struggle for freedom. Gandhi's emergence as the undisputed leader of the Indian National Congress is an interesting story by itself. After twenty years' stay in Africa, Gandhi returned to India in 1914. He decided to guide India's political scenario. Soon after his arrival, and in pursuance of a promise made to Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Gandhiji began a years' tour of his Motherland. He spent next four years (1914-18) in studying the Indian situation and prepared himself and those who wanted to follow his path for satyagraha or the application of the soul force based on truth for the removal of the social and political inequalities from which then India suffered. But he was not simply an inactive observer during this period. In 1915, he established, the Satyagraha *Ashram* near Ahmedabad where a little group of man who had accepted his general principles settled.

Gandhi's Local Experiments:

(I)*Champaran Satyagraha*: In 1917 A.D. Gandhi started Satyagraha in the *Champaran* district of Bihar to ameliorate the condition of the peasants who cultivated indigo. Under the *Tinkathia* system they were bound to grow indigo in their land. They were liable to unlawful extraction and oppression by the planers. Gandhi made a systematic enquiry of their grievances. He, along with a batch of congress workers went to *Chanmparan* but the British officers ordered them to go back. Gandhi opposed it and started satyagraha. Ultimately the Government officers were compelled to withdraw their orders. Gandhiji formed a committee to look into the grievances of the peasants. It was Gandhi's first attempt of Civil Disobedience and it was successful.

(II) Supported Mill Workers of Ahmedabad: In 1919 A.D. the textile mill owners reduced the wage of their workers. It resulted in a dispute between the mill owners and the workers. The workers organized a Hartal. Gandhiji went to Ahmedabad and started hunger strike to get the demands of the workers accepted. The mill owners had to submit to the workers to increase their wages by 35%.

(III) *Kheda* Struggle: No sooner was the Ahmedabad mill strike over then a new struggle began which put into operation Satyagraha. In Kheda district of Gujrat, the crop failed, and famine

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conditions threatened. Many cultivators were unable to pay the tax. He drafted a petition and asked for the suspension of revenue collection. But the Government rejected the petition.

The *Gujrat Sabha,* of which Gandhi was the president, played a leading role in the agitation. Appeals and petitions having failed, Gandhi advised the withholding of revenue, and asked the peasants to 'fight into death against such a spirit of vindictiveness and tyranny' and show that 'it is impossible to govern men without their consent'[1] News of the struggle spread all over India people from different sections of India sent money to Gandhi to help the fight. Time passed and the peasants began to lose nerve under the threat of the officials and their cattle and good being seized and sold. In some cases government also attacked the standing crops. People were losing their hope. Gandhi felt that something urgent had to be done. He suggested to some of his followers that they should remove the crops themselves from a field that had been attacked by the government. He knew that it would be followed by arrests, but all were ready to face the consequences. They were arrested and given short terms of imprisonment, fortunately the struggle ended soon by on agreed compromise. Gandhi later recalled that by this time ' the people were exhausted' and he was actually 'casting about for some graceful way of terminating the struggle….'[2]The Kheda struggle was a great step in the awakening of the masses of India to a sense of their rights and their own ability to get their demands accepted by the Government.

Champaran, Ahmedabad and *Kheda* served as demonstrations of Gandhiji's style and method of politics to the country at large. They also helped him find his feet among the people of India and study their problems at close quarters. He came to possess, as a result of these struggles, a surer understanding of the strengths and weakness of the masses, as well as of the viability of his own political style. [3]

Second Phrase of Gandhi's Leadership in Indian Freedom Struggle: 1919 - 1930

Agitation against Rowlatt Act.: During the World War I, the Defence of India rules were in operation which gave arbitrary powers to the Government. When the war came to an end in 1919, the government again wanted to arm itself with such powers to suppress the revolutionary movement in the country. In 1919, a committee headed by Mr. Justice Rowlatt was appointed to investigate the alarming growth of revolutionary activities and to make recommendation for their

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efficient suppression. On the recommendation of the committee, the Government passed the Rowlatt Bills which empowered the government to arrest and try political leaders by special tribunals set up under this act. It could arrest any person without giving any reason, search any place without a warrant and imprison anyone without trial. The judges were empowered to try political cases without jury. The act in reality 'aimed at severely curtailing the civil liberties of Indians in the name of curbing terrorist violence, were introduced in the Legislative Council'[4]. Mahatma Gandhi said, "They are striking demonstration of the civil services to retain its grip on our necks. It considers the bills to be an open challenge to us." *Pandit* Motilal Nehru said the essence of bills were no *vakil,* no *dalil,* no appeal. None of the official member of the Central Legislative Council supported the Bill.

The Rowlatt Acts were received with great discontent by every section of Indian public opinion. Consequently, the national leaders started an intense agitation throughout the country against the act.

Mahatma Gandhi declared 6th April 1919 as Satyagraha day, a day of Hartals and protests against the Rowlatt Bill. It was a unique success. Some incidents of violence took place in Delhi and Ahmedabad. Punjab, which was suffering from the after-effects of severe war-time repression, forcible recruitment, and the ravages of disease, reacted particularly strongly and both in Amritsar and Lahore the situation became very dangerous for the Government. Gandhiji tried to go to Punjab to help and to quiten the people, but the Government deported him to Bombay.

JallianwallaBagh Tragedy: 13th April, 1919: The most serious disturbance, however, took place at Amritsar, where there prominent Englishmen were killed. Michael O' Dyer, the governor of Punjab, apprehending a general revolt issued a proclamation on April 11, which forbade meetings and processions. The Government also arrested two prominent congress leaders Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlu and Dr. Satya Pal. On April 13, Baisakhi Day, about 20,000 people assembled for a peaceful general meeting at the JallianwallaBagh, to protest against the arrest of their leaders. A large number of people who had come to visit Harimandar also joined the meeting. Brigadier General Dyer was seeking opportunity to teach the people a lesson for flouting the government orders. He arrived at JallianwalaBagh with 500 troops, who were

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ordered to open the fire without giving the people a warming to disperse. About 400 peoples were killed and nearly 1200 were wounded. This tragedy is known as JallianwalaBagh Tragedy. General Dyer had hoped that his action would cool down disturbances not only in the Punjab but also in the whole of India.

The great poet, Rabindranath Tagore surrendered his title 'sir' as a measure of protest. Gandhi lost his faith in the professions of goodwill of the British government. After JallianwallaBagh Tragedy, Martial Law was imposed in the whole of the Punjab. Public floggings were not infrequent and excesses were perpetrated against the people. The JalianwallaBagh Tragedy and the declaration of martial Law thereafter widened the gulf between the government and the national leaders. The people were not frightened into submission. On the contrary, their determination to fight against the alien rule becomes stronger.

The brutality at JallianwalaBagh stunned the entire nation. The response would come, not immediately, but a little later. For the moment, repression was intensified. Gandhi, overwhelmed by the total atmosphere of violence, withdrew the movement on 18 April. That did not mean, however, that Gandhi had lost faith either in his non-violent Satyagraha or in the capacity of the Indian people, to adopt it as a method of struggle. A year later, he launched another nation-wide struggle, on a scale larger than that of the RowlattSatyagraha. The wrong inflicted on Punjab was one of the major reasons for launching it. The Mahatma's 'Indian Experiment' had begun[5].

Khilafat Agitation and Gandhi: Among these happenings of national resentment, a new issue stirred the emotions of Indian Muslims. It was concerned with Khilafat, the highest religious office in the Islamic world. After the first Great War was over, the Allies decided to disband the office of the Caliph (Khalifat). This enraged the Muslims who consider it as an insult to their religious beliefs.The Muslims of India started a powerful politico-religious movement known as Khilafat Movement. Its leaders, Ali Brothers (Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali) plunged themselves heart and soul into the movement. Muslim theologies also lent their support to them. Its purpose was to organize a countrywide agitation if the position of Khalifa was undermined.

Gandhi viewed the Khilafat movement as a golden opportunity for bringing Muslims and Hindus together on the national front. He had been interested in Hindu-Muslim unity since his days in South-Africa. The Lacknow pact, according to him, did not form an adequate basis for

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unity. He had established contact with Ali Brothers and felt that their Khilafat demand was just. He protested against their arrest. The Versailles Treaty sharpened the enlargement of the movement by dismembering the Turkish Empire. The Khilafat agitation was to him 'an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Muslims.'Gandhiji viewed it rather too simply as a unity of hearts. 'If I deem the Mohamedan to be my brother,' he wrote in young India, 'it is my duty to help him in his hour of peril to the best of my ability, if his cause commands itself to me as just."[6]

The Khilafat committee launched a non-cooperation movement on 31 August, 1920 and Gandhi was the first to join it. The congress met in a special session in September 1920 at Calcutta (Kolkata) and agreed to start the Non-cooperation movement. The decision was further endorsed at its Nagpur session held in December 1920.

Non-Cooperation: In spite of the sincere appeal made by Gandhi to the Viceroy to revise the peace terms made with Turkey through which the Turkey Empire was deprived to be proceeded by fasting and prayers on July 31st . The movement was launched formally on 1stAugust 1920, after the expiry of the notice that Gandhi had given to the Viceroy in his letter of 22June, in which he had asserted the right recognized 'from time immemorial of the subject to refuse to assist a ruler who misrules'[7]

The leaders of the Khilafat movement also endorsed the Non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi. Thus the demand of the Khilafat committee and the congress were merged into one. The Non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi was to fulfill the following demands.

- The British Government should offer better peace terms to Turkey, and should not touch the 'Khalifa' title of the Sultan.
- New scheme of reforms should be placed before the Indian people who should take India nearer to the attainment of Swaraj.

The people were asked to –

1) Refuse to attend government or semi-government functions.
2) Have gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges which were controlled by the government.

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3) Refuse on the past of military, labour class and clerical class to offer themselves as recruits in Mesopotamia.
4) Boycott of British court by the lawyers and litigants.
5) Boycott of foreign goods.
6) Boycott of the elections to be held by the councils according to Indian government Act of 1919.
7) Surrender of all titles and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies.
8) People should establish schools, colleges and private arbitration courts all over India. Develop harmony between Hindus and Muslims and attempt for emancipation of women and the removal of the untouchablity.
9) To revive hand-weaving and hand-spinning and popularize *Swadeshi*.

The non-cooperation movement was based on perfect non-violence. Gandhi regarded it not merely a political programme but also as a religious movement to clear Indian political life of corruption, terrorism and the fear of white race.

Many distinguished persons like Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Lala Lajpat Rai, Rajendra Prasad and Nehru left their practices and joined the movement. Many students gave up the national institutions and government controlled schools and colleges. The *swadeshi* become popular and Khadi become a symbol of freedom. Huge bone fires of foreign cloths were organized all over the country. The 'Tilak Swaraj Fund' was started to finance the movement and with a short time over a core rupees were subscribed. Even the visit of the Prince of Wales was boycotted and a complete hartal was observed on 17 November, 1921 in Bombay to protest his arrival.

"But, perhaps, the most successful item of the programme was the boycott of foreign cloth. Volunteers would go from house to house collecting clothes made of foreign cloth, and the entire community would collect to light a bonfire of the goods"[8]

In this connection Gandhiji made his stand clear by pointing out, 'In burning my foreign clothes I burn my shame ... my modesty has prevented me from declaring from the house – top that the message of non-cooperation, non-violence and Swadeshi is a massage to the world… our non-

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co-operation is with the system the English nor with the west. Our non-cooperation is with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our non-cooperation is a retirement within ourselves". Thus by discarding and burning foreign clothes, Ganhiji was attempting to transfer the hatred, resentment, animosity and ill-will of the Indians against the British from man to things. As a substitute Gandhiji emphasized to wear only hand-spun clothes and for this the people were advised to spin and waves. Louis Fischer writes, "As the flames ate their way through the imported foods, Gandhi would tell his audiences that they must not substitute Indian will products for foreign manufactures, they must learn to spin and weave. Gandhi took to spinning half an hour a day, usually before the midday meal, and required all his associates to do likewise."[9]

"Events that have happened during the past month have confirmed me in the opinion that the imperial Government have acted in the Khalifat matter in an unscrupulous, immoral, and unjust manner and have been moving from wrong to wrong in order to defend their immorality. I can retain neither respect nor affection for such a government.

"Your Excellency's light-hearted treatment of official crime, your exoneration of Sir Michael O' Dwyer, Mr. Montagu's dispatch, and above all the shameful ignorance of the Punjab events and callous disregard of the feelings of Indian, betrayed by the House of Lords have filled me with the gravest misgivings regarding the future of the Empire, have estranged me completely from the present government and have disabled me from rendering as I have hitherto-whole heartedly tendered my loyal co-operation.

"In my humble opinion the ordinary method of agitation by way of petitions, deputations, and the like is no remedy for moving to repentance a Government so hopelessly indifferent to the welfare of it's as the government of India has proved to be. In countries condemnation of such gracious wrongs as the Punjab would result in a bloody revolution by the people. They would have resisted, at all costs, national emasculation. Half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance, and the other half is unwilling to do so. I have, therefore ventured to suggest the remedy of non-cooperation, which enables those who wish to dissociate themselves from government …"[10]

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However, in spite of Gandhi's best effort to keep the movement non-violent, the movement degenerated into violence at Chauri-Chaura which forced Gandhi to withdraw the movement. His decision was highly criticized at the national level. Matilal Nehru, C. R. Das, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and many others recorded their utter bewilderment on hearing the news. They could not understand why the whole country had to pay the price for the misbehavior of handful of people in a remote village. Many people in the country lost faith on Gandhi's leadership. Marxist historiographer Bipan Chandra observes "the action of Chauri-Chaura was a symbol and an indication of the growing radicalization, of their willingness to launch an attack on the status quo of property relations. Frightened by this radical possibility and by the prospect of the movement going out of his hands and into the hands of radical forces, and in order to protect the interests of the landlords and capitalists who would inevitably be at the receiving end of this violence, Gandhiji cried halt to the movement"[11]

Third Phrase of Gandhi's Leadership in Indian Freedom Struggle:1930 - 1947

The freedom struggle in the nineteen thirties took many steps forward. The decade started with the Second non-cooperation movement under Gandhi's leadership. The terrorist activities gave great impetus to the freedom struggle. The Government felt the need of a fresh review of the political situation in India. In 1927 A.D., it appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Sir Simon to review the progress made by the Indians after the implementation of the reforms of 1919 A.D. and to recommend measures for further constitutional changes in the country. The Congress decided to boycott commission. Demonstrations, black flags and loud slogans of 'Go Back Simon' greeted the commission whenever it went.

While the Simon Commission was carrying on its work without any regard for the Indian public opinion, the leading Indian political parties were trying to lay down a common political programme. In February 1928 A.D an all parties Conference appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to decide the question of framing a Constitution for India. The Committee prepared a report which laid down dominion status as India's political objective.

On December 25, 1929, the 44th session of Indian National Congress was held at Lahore under the president ship of Jawaharlal Nehru. By this time all the Congress leaders were convinced that the British government would not grant Swaraj to India till it was forced to do so.

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It was during this session that a resolution for complete independence was passed on December 31, 1929 and the newly adopted tricolour flag of independence was hosted. On January 26, 1930, the first Independence Day celebrations were held at different places. The Lahore session gave the whole country a new hope. The Lahore Congress of 1929 had authorized the working committee to launch a programme of civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. It had also called upon all members of legislatures to resign their seats. In mid-February, 1930, the working committee entrusted Gandhi with the responsibility to launch the Civil Disobedience movement. Gandhi wanted to give a chance to the Government before embarking on such a big movement. However, before the actual launching, according to the theory of non-violence, Gandhi intended to make a compromise with the British as well as to test them to relinquish the power. For this purpose he put forward eleven points demands to be fulfilled immediately by the British Government, which according to Gandhi were the substance of independence. 'Let the viceroy satisfy these very simple but virtual needs of India. He will then hear no talk of civil disobedience, and the congress will hearty participate in any conference where there is perfect freedom of expression and demand'[12]. The eleven points put forward by Gandhi were designed to root out the major evils of the foundation of structural violence established and practiced by the British Raj. These included, 'Reduction of land revenue to at least 50 per cent and making it subject to legislative control; Abolition of the salt tax; reduction of salaries of the higher grade service to one half or less so as to suit the reduced revenue; protective tariff on foreign cloth; The passage of the costal Traffic on foreign cloth, the passage of the Costal traffic Reservation Bill; Discharge of all political prisoners, save those condemned for murder of the attempt threat by the ordinary Judicial tribunal, withdrawal of all political prosecutions; abrogation of section 124 A ; the Regulation of 1818 and the like and permission to all the Indian exiles to return; Abolition of C.I.D. or its popular control ; issue of licenses to use fire arms for self- defense subject to popular control.'[13]

However this time, having learnt from the past experiences, he made a few adjustments in his non-violent theory and action in order to gain maximum support from Indian masses. Gandhi declared, 'Those, who hold non-violence for the attainment of freedom as an article of faith, are in no way superior to those with whom it is a mere policy, even as there is no such inequality between brown men and yellow men'[14]

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Gandhi was more concerned with the internal reform of the Indian society than with the expulsion of the Britishers from India. The colonial and imperial considerations and interests forced the viceroy Lord Irwin to ignore the Eleven points put forwarded by Gandhi. And thus Gandhi was left no alternative other than the launching of the Civil Disobedience Movement. [15]

The people were asked to defy the laws and orders of the government without resolving to violent means. Mahatma Gandhi led the movement. He adopted a quite new and effective method to fight the government. On March 11, 1930 A.D. after previous notice to the viceroy, Gandhiji along with his 79 selected and trusted followers started from Sabarmati Ashram (Ahmedabad) to Dandi a village on the sea coast of Gujrat, 320 kms away. The object of his march was to disobey the salt laws by picking, up lumps of natural salt on the *Dandi* coast. Salt is the most necessary article of the common man's food. The government had doubled the duty on the salt and also prevented the making of salt from sea water. 'Girls and ladies form aristocratic families and from families where *purdah* had been observed came out into the streets to demonstrate.'[16] Gandhi and his followers reached Dandi on April 5. On the morning of 6th April, he violated the salt laws which signaled the beginning of countrywide waves of civil disobedience. Violation of laws, non-payment of taxes, boycott of foreign products, mass strikes and demonstrations shook the whole country. Foreign goods and cloth were burnt at public places. The government, as before, attempted to crush the movement through ruthless suppression, lathi charges and firing on unarmed crowd of men and women. Gandhi condemned the Government's barbarous and brutal repression of the civil resisters' of the non-violent struggle and described the Government's repression as '*Gonda Raj'* and "veiled from of Martial Law"[17]

In order to show further non-violent strength in the face of government brutalities Gandhi decided to organize the peaceful and non-violent raids on the salt depots at Dharasana, successful in exposing the violence of the Government and own the sympathy of the people in all over the world. The brave Satyagrahis became the source of inspiration for the rest of the people of all over India. The congress working committee met and passed an important resolution investing Gandhi with the powers to negotiate a settlement in the name of the congress. At last on 17th February 1931, Gandhi and Lord Irwin started talks which culminated in the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact or the Delhi Pact which resulted in the postponement of the Civil Disobedience

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Movement for the time being. Finally, in March 1931 A.D. Lord Irwin and Gandhi reached all political prisoners except those convicted of violent crimes released. Gandhi on his side agreed to withdraw the Civil Disobedience Movement and stood for the participation of the Round Table Conference.

Gandhi went to England in September 1931, to attend second Round Table Conference as the sole representative of the Congress. Gandhi emphatically demanded the grant of dominion status at once. As regards, the Muslim demand for separate electorates, Mahatma Gandhi made it clear that framing a Constitution should have precedence over the communal problem. The British Government refused to accept the basic demand for freedom on the basis of immediate grant of Dominion status. The Conference broke down and Mahatma Gandhi returned to India.

Since the Indian delegates at the Second Round Table Conference failed to arrive at a settlement on the Communal issue, the British Prime Minister, Ramasay Macdonald announced his scheme of minority representation known as the Communal Award. According to this scheme, besides the Muslims, the scheme gave separate representation to the Indian Christians and Europeans.

The separation of the scheduled caste from the Hindus was a bombshell for Mahatma Gandhi. To protest against the communal Award, he began his fast unto death. The Government did not care to save his life or accept his demand. The condition of M. Gandhi began to deteriorate. The Indian leaders could not remain indifferent to the problems created by the Award. Ultimately, after much deliberation, they reached an argument which is called the Poona pact. According to it, seats were reserved for the scheduled castes but their election was to be through the general electorate from a penal of names chosen by them in a primary election.

The congress called upon the nation to resume the civil Disobedience Movement. The new Governor General, Lord Willington launched upon a policy of unprecedented repression to crush the congress. Gandhi and other prominent congress leader were arrested and the party was declared as illegal body. Police action surpassed even its own past records of shame. It indulged in waked terror and committed innumerable atrocities on the freedom fighters.

Gradually, the civil Disobedience Movement began to show signs of decay. Gandhi officially ended the Movement in May 1931 A.D.

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The British Government held 3rd Round Table Conference at London from 17th Nov. to 24th December 1932 to solve this constitutional problem of India. The congress did not participate in this conference. On the basis of the decision taken at the three conferences the Br. Govt. published a white paper in March 1933. A joint parliamentary committee of both the houses of the British Parliament deliberates on the white paper. On the basis of report of this committee a bill was passed in the British Parliament which is known and the Government of India Act. 1935.

In 1940 A.D. the position of Britain in the war began to deteriorate. It appealed to the people of India to help them in fighting the war. On 1st June, Mahatma Gandhi offered the help the Government of two conditions:-

1. Independence as the goal of India was declared.
2. A provisional Government comprising various parties set up in the country.

In August 1940 A.D. Lord Linlithgow, the viceroy of India, after consultations with all the political parties of India, on behalf of the British Government, issued a statement known as August offer. The Congress rejected the August Offer, because it made mere promises of some concessions in the future. In order to make the British realize that Indians were not willing to cooperate with it in its war effort, Gandhi started individual Satyagraha.

After the failure of the August offer, 1940, the Congress realized that it was necessary to take some action in the form of protest against the British attitude towards Indian problem. Gandhi did not approve, and being a true believer in non-violence he approved the idea of launching an extensive anti-war movement. He did not like to embarrass the British who were engaged in a life and death struggle. However, to register a moral protest against the British attitude, he thought Satyagraha as the best course of action. According to this new programme, the men and women of India were to protest individually against dragging India into the war and the governmental attack on the right of speech. They were to disasociate themselves from the war effort publicly and court arrest. Vinoba Bhave was given the single honour of being selected as the first individual satyagrahi. The man so selected was to give a notice to the district authorities, stating their intention to ask the people not to help in the war efforts. The government rigidly controlled the movement and it was not allowed to take the shape of a mass movement. But on December 7, 1941, Japan entered the war against the Allies and Indian was now in immediate

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danger. It was under these circumstances that the working committee of the congress felt a great concern over the safety of India and decided to suspend the individual satyagraha.

By the end of the year 1941 A.D., the war also spread to the south East Asia. But when the Japanese invaded Burma and occupied Rangoon on March 8, 1942 A.D., the British Government earnestly wanted co-operation of Indians in their war efforts. The Government declared India to be belligerent nation against the Axis Powers 'without consulting the Congress or the elected members of the central Legislature.'[18] In order to effect an amicable settlement with the Indian political leaders, the British Government sent to India in March 1942 A.D., a mission under Sir Stafford Cripps.

The Cripps proposals constituted a serious attempt of the British Government to satisfy the different political parties of India. The proposals marked an appreciable advance upon the August offer and were more concrete and precise in nature. But all these changer were to be introduced after the termination of the war. The Congress and the other political parties rejected the proposals on one on the other ground. The proposals sowed the seeds of the partition of India

The failure of Cripps Mission led to wide spread disappointment and anger in the country. The congress now decided to intensify the struggle to compel the British to accept Indian demand for independence. The All India Congress Committee met on August 1942 A.D. and planed the famous Quit India Resolution and decided to launch a man struggle on non-violent lines to achieve independence under Gandhi's leadership.

The Government arrested Gandhi on August 1942. At the time of his arrest, Gandhiji gave an instruction to the civil resisters 'Let every non-violent soldiers of freedom write out "Do or Die" on a piece of paper or cloth and stick it on his cloths, so that in case he died in the course of offering Satyagraha, he might be distinguished by that sign from other elements.'

The movement soon took the form of a violent outbreak, which included cutting of telegraph wires, damaging railway lines and burning of government buildings.The Government made a determined bid to crush the movement as quickly as possible. Besides normal repressive measures, the Government restored to machine guns and aerial firing. The military took over many towns and cities. People were subjected to inhuman treatment and prisoners were tortured. It is estimated that over 10,000 people were killed in police and military firings. In about three months, the government succeeded in crushing the uprising.

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After a long sacrifices committed by our national leaders as well as common masses, India achieved her independence on 15th of August, 1947, a long history of freedom struggle of India come to a successful ending, but freedom with partition of Hindus and Muslims of Indian nation into two separate nations. What about Gandhiji's reaction towards this new development, the man who fought for Hindu-Muslim brotherhood almost for his whole period. Gandhi's unhappiness and helplessness have often is being pointed out. His inaction have been explained in terms of his forced isolation from the Congress decision making councils and his inability to condemn his disciples, Nehru and Patel, for having succumbed to the lust for power, as they had followed him faithfully for many years, at great personal sacrifice.[19]

Bipan Chandra observes, the root of Gandhiji's helplessness was neither Jinah's intransigence nor his disciples' alleged lust for power, but the communalization of his people. At his prayer meeting on 4th June 1947 he accepted partition because the people wanted it: 'the demand has been granted because you asked for it. The Congress never asked for it…But the Congress can feel the pulse of the people. It realized that the *Khalsa* as also the Hindus desired it.'[20]

Critical understanding of Gandhi's leadership

Indian nationalism achieved its highest peak under Gandhi's leadership. No doubt it was he, who organized the movement on mass basis. "The texture of Gandhi's consciousness was essentially bourgeois and, therefore, his nationalism was governed by a bourgeois class outlook. What does this signify? It means that his conceptions of Imperialism, of struggle against Imperialism, of the methods of that struggle of national independence, were determined by that class outlook."[21]

Gandhi felt convinced that a happy prosperous national existence could be built up on the basis of a capitalist social system. This was due to the class limitation of his world outlook. Indian capitalism was not a young capitalism with a prosperous future in front of it. It was a feeble part of the declining world capitalism. Gandhi, however, due to class inhibition, was unable to transcend the bourgeois outlook and therefore was unable to see the social roots of wars, exploitation and oppression and attributed them to man's weak ethical nature.

Though Gandhi was an anti-communalist *par excellence* and the struggled for achieving Hindu-Muslim unity, but in tragic reality, the Hindu-Muslim antagonism, instead of decreasing, became

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accentuated from stage to stage. This was his inability to trace the socio-historical genesis of that antagonism.

The nationalist movement led by Gandhi and governed by Gandhian ideologies thus became a peculiar blend of bold advances followed by sudden and capricious halts, challenges succeeded by unwarranted compromises, resulting in uncertainties, confusion and befogging of perspective of the masses. This, paradoxically, strengthened the very reactionary tendencies which Gandhi wanted to eliminate.

Conclusion: Gandhi was having an unflinching and unshakable faith in the theory of non-violence. For his whole life, both in South-Africa as well as in India, he preached and practiced the theory of non-violence, not as a policy but as a principle, as a conviction and creed. Non-violence was the first article of his faith and it was also the last article of his creed. Though he was not the pioneer of the doctrine of non –violence, but he is credited with redefining the philosophy of non-violence. Gandhi evolved and developed a powerful non-violent method, giving it the name Satyagraha. Gandhi defined Satyagraha as a Non-violent force or Truth-force or Love-force or Moral-force or Spiritual-force and strength to adopt and apply it in every field of life.

Champaran Satyagraha laid the foundation stone of Gandhi's future leadership at all-India level which waged a consistent and long moral and non-violent warfare to make India free from the British imperialism and colonialism. Like Champaran Satyagraha, the successes of Ahmedabad Satyagraha and Kheda Satyagraha further strengthened the people's confidence in Gandhi's theory of non-violence and his non-violent method of Satyagraha. Through the successful application of these three Satyagraha, Gandhi succeeded in awakening the people to unite against the injustices, evils and exploitations committed either by the Indian people or the Britishers. Gandhi entered the Congress and assumed the national leadership enjoying the support and fulfilling the aspirations of both the Muslims and Hindus and thereby, building up a strong moral pressure on the British Government to pay to the demands of the Indian people.

The partition of India and the attention Hindu-Muslim communal riots, both before and after the division of the Country provided a heavy blow to the non-violent efforts of Gandhi to

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keep India and the Hindus and Muslims united. But even in the darkest period of communal frenzy, Gandhi did not lose his faith and confidence in his theory and practice of non-violence. He fought non-violently and succeeded in uniting the Hindus and Muslims and thereby establishing communal harmony and peace in achieving Indian independence.

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[3]Bipan Chandra and Others, *India's struggle for independence* p-181

[4]Ibid, p-181

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[6]Bipan Chandra, AmalesTripathi, BarunDe,*Freedom Struggle*, p- 126

[7] Gandhi, CW, Vol. XVII. p. 504

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[9] Louis Fischer, *The life of Mahatam Gandhi*, p-192.

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[12]The CWMG, Vol.42, 1970,p-434

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[15]Ibid

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